



Full Length Research Paper

**Educational Practitioners' Perceptions on the Role and Contribution of Dialects for the Learning and Achievement of Students**

**Wondimu Tegegne**

*Wolayita Soddo University, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Wolayita Soddo, Ethiopia*

Received: 2 March, 2017; Accepted: 13 June, 2017; Published: 26 June, 2017

---

**Abstract**

*The attitudes towards dialects and their speakers have been a topic of discussion in academic setting. Specifically, the perception of educational practitioners on the role of dialects for education is important as it can affect the practices of the practitioners in their respective work place. Besides, the perceptions of the practitioners have significant implications for the use of dialects in the schools as it can determine the value and emphasis given to the dialects in education. Hence, the perception of educational practitioners towards dialects can affect their use in education and can have an impact on students' learning and achievement. Based on this fact, the current study is intended to explore the perceptions of educational practitioners on the role and contribution of dialects for the learning and achievement of students. To achieve this objective, data were collected from teachers, educational authorities and textbook and exam writers using questionnaire and interview. The analysis of the collected data revealed that the majority of the teachers reported that dialects have a great role in education and support the consideration of dialects in academic setting. Similarly, the textbook and exam writers, and educational authorities considered in this study replied that dialects have a great roles in education and the concern of dialects needs attention in educational context. This could mean that the majority of the respondents had positive perception towards the role of dialects for education and could treat dialects positively in educational setting.*

**Keywords:** *Achievement, Dialects, Educational Practitioners, Learning, Perception, Students*

---

**Author Email:** [Wondelove7@gmail.com](mailto:Wondelove7@gmail.com)

Author(s) agree that this article remain permanently open access

### **Background of the Study**

It is generally argued that all languages exhibit a great deal of internal variations (Wardhaugh, 2006). For instance, a language shows variations in the specific way of speaking or writing (style), the social group or geographical area where it is spoken (dialect) and the specific human activity where it is used (register) (Coupland and Joworski, 1997; Hudson, 2001). Dialect is generally defined as any variety of a language used by a group of speakers and characterized by systematic differences in pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar from the other varieties of the same language (Dawnes, 1998). The term dialect is also used to refer to any regional, social or ethnic variety of a language.

The varieties of language used by members of a society vary from group to group and place to place. It is argued that all varieties of a language are equal and none of the varieties are superior or inferior to the other varieties as far as their linguistic features and functions are concerned (Trudgill, 2001). But, the varieties can be at different level of development, status, legal recognition, used for various purposes and in different contexts. Consequently, the language varieties spoken in certain community can be classified as standard and non-standard dialects. The standard dialect is a prestigious, codified variety that has the highest social status and used in formal occasions (Holmes, 2001; Sailzmann, 2007). On the contrary, the non-standard dialect is any variety of language which is not standardized and lacks prestige (Cook, 2003). Sometimes the standards variety is considered as a language; whereas, the non-standard variety is considered as a dialect (Dawnes, 1998).

Besides, in many languages the varieties are associated with prestige, power and prejudice of the society they are serving. Accordingly, the speakers of a language often assign social value to the linguistic forms used by certain groups (Holmes, 2001). By attaching social value, the speakers categorize the language variants as socially prestigious or socially stigmatized.

Wolfram (1998), described the two as “socially prestigious variants are those forms that are positively valued through their association with high status groups as linguistic markers of status; whereas, socially stigmatized variants carry a stigma through their association with low-status groups.” Most of the time the standard variety is taken as the prestigious variety; whereas, the non-standard variety is lacking prestigious and hence, taken as a stigmatized variety (Milroy, 2007).

In addition, considering the power (both economic and political) of the speakers, the varieties are given different values by language users. Consequently, the standard variety is often considered as ‘strong’, ‘correct’, ‘superior’ and ‘better’ form of a language; whereas, the non-standard varieties are considered as ‘weak’, ‘wrong’, ‘incorrect’, ‘dirty’, and ‘illogical’ forms of a language (Cook, 2003; Chambers, 2008). However, linguists argue that all variants of a language are equal in terms of their linguistic system as well as the functions they serve. Various scholars (Hudson, 2001; Adger and Chirstian, 2007; Reaser and Adger, 2008) indicated that the non-standard dialects are systematic and rule governed as the standard dialect, having their own sound features, lexical items and grammatical patterns. It is also argued that no dialect is better or worse than the other dialect (Romaine, 2000). Thus, the variants are preferred or stigmatized on non-linguistic grounds. As stated above, though language varieties are equal in their linguistic organization and structure, the speakers hold their own attitudes towards the varieties. However, it is generally said that societies have positive attitude towards the standard variety and negative attitude towards the non-standard varieties (Preston and Robinson, 2005).

It is also said that the social evaluation of and belief about language varieties can affect the selection of the language varieties for instructional purposes. For example, despite the arguments for the use of the non-standard dialects in education, many schools continued to teach or use the

standard variety, ignoring the non-standard dialect (Cheshire, 2005; Rosenberg, 1989). Hence, educational practitioners' perception on the role and contribution of dialects for education can affect the selection of dialects for instructional purposes. Furthermore, the attitudes of educational practitioners towards the non-standard varieties and their speakers have been a topic of discussion in academic setting. The attitudes of teachers, educational authorities and students towards the non-standard varieties play an important role in the learning of students. Their attitudes have significant implications for the use of dialects in the classroom as it can determine the value and emphasis given to the dialects in education. However, the attitude of teachers is more important because teachers can directly affect the students' learning and achievement. In addition, teachers' attitude play crucial role in shaping the classroom environment, which has an impact on a students' self-esteem and behaviors (Dooly, 2005). Generally, the attitudes of the educational practitioners (i.e., textbook & exam writers, teachers, educational authorities and students) towards language varieties can affect their use in education and can have an impact on students' learning and achievement. Hence, this study tries to describe the perception of educational practitioners regarding the role and contribution of dialects for educational purposes.

### **Rationale for the Study**

In multidialectal society, the issue of dialect and education in general and the issue of choosing the variety to be used as a Language of instruction (henceforth LOI) in particular has been a great concern of linguists, educators and researchers for a long period of time (Yiakoumetti, 2007). This is because selecting the variety to be used as a LOI in multidialectal society is difficult as well as controversial because of various reasons, one of the reasons is the perceptions towards the varieties of a language. Specifically, the perception of educational practitioners on the role of dialects for education is important as it may affect the practice of the stakeholders in their respective place of work. For example,

theoretically, it is argued that the experts should value and consider the different dialects of a language while preparing textbooks and national Exams. But the experts may only use the variety that they consider as a 'good' variety in textbook and national Exam writing. This shows that the perception affects their practice in the area of textbook and national Exam writing. Therefore, it is rationale to study the educational practitioners' perceptions on the role and contribution of dialects for the learning and achievement of students.

The perception of the educational practitioners towards the varieties of a language is also an issue in dialect and education. However, it is noted that the perception of educational practitioners is not similar. In some countries, there is positive attitude towards dialects and their use in education. For example, Rosenberg (1989) explained that in Switzerland there is a greater tolerance of dialect usage. In South Tyrol, Italy, dialect has a much wider acceptance and a dialect-oriented school textbook has been introduced by the government. Besides, Neberg cited in Jorgensen and Pedersen (1989), said that teachers have positive attitudes towards dialects. In other countries, however, the perception of educational practitioners is not positive. For instance, in Holland, teachers believe that only the standard speakers would be received to heaven (Sturm, 1989). In Britain, speakers of the non-standard dialects were characterized as having 'evil habits of speech' (Hollingworth, 1989). Similarly, Rosenberg (1989) stated that dialects have been considered as a bad habit that should be cured as soon as possible. In addition, Craen and Humblet (1989) noted that educational authorities in Belgium have an opinion that students should strive as far as possible towards the standard variety and avoid dialect as much as possible. Currently, the negative perception and erroneous assumptions about the non-standard dialects have not totally disspread from schools. So, it is necessary to explore the perceptions of Ethiopian educational practitioners (specifically the practitioners in Oromia National Regional State) on the role of dialects for educational purposes.

## **J. Equity Sci. & Sust. Dev.**

In Ethiopia, MOE (1994) declared that students' mother tongue can be used for instruction. However, the educational policy lacks details regarding the dialect(s) that should be used for the instructional purpose and what must be done in difficult situations, like when there are diverse dialects within the same language. Hence, the incorporation of dialects in educational system is questionable and debatable as Gfeller (1999) noted. Currently, Afan Oromo is used as a medium of instruction and taught as a subject at various educational levels. But, it has different regional dialects. To use Afan Oromo effectively for instruction and to ensure the benefits of all students, dialectal variations should be considered and valued in education. On the other hand, the inclusion of Afan Oromo dialects in education depends upon the awareness and perception of the educational practitioners. This shows that their perception plays a great role in the selection of dialects in education. Thus, this study has been initiated to assess the perception educational practitioners regarding the role and contribution of dialects for educational purposes and to describe the implication of the perception for the use of Afan Oromo dialects in education. Moreover, as far as the reading of the researchers is concerned, no study has been conducted on the topic under consideration. This study, therefore, attempted to fill the felt research gap.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main purposes of the study were to:

- Describe the perception of educational practitioners regarding the role and contribution of dialects for educational purposes.
- Explain the implications of the educational practitioners' perception for the inclusion of Afan Oromo dialects in education.

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

Descriptive Research design was employed to describe the perception educational practitioners

on the role and contribution of dialects for the learning and achievement of students. Besides, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed to achieve the main purpose of the study.

### **Research Setting**

The Oromia Region and Oromia Zone of the Amhara Region were purposively selected as the general research setting from among the federal regions. This is because Afan Oromo is a LOI in these regions. Accordingly, the necessary data for this study was believed to be collected from the two regions. Besides, Afan Oromo spoken in these two regions is classified into four main dialect areas: Central Dialect, Eastern Dialect, Wollo Dialect and Western Dialect (Kebede, 2009). These dialect areas were selected purposively for similar reasons. In one dialect area (i.e., Raya which is under the administration of the Tigray Region), Afan Oromo is not used for instructional purposes and Educational Curriculum of Oromia is not implemented in the area. Thus, it was believed that appropriate data for this study would be secured from the rest of the four dialect areas. Accordingly, the four dialect areas, i.e., Central, Eastern, Wollo and Western were selected as a research setting for this study. To collect the necessary data for this study, specific zones were selected from each of the identified four dialect areas as follows.

Afan Oromo dialects are categorized into four dialect areas according to the similarities they share and differences they had. That is, the areas that are classified under one dialect category share similarities in pronunciation, lexical items, syntactic construction and grammatical features. Because of this, it was believed that one zone could represent the other zones, which are under the same dialect area. Thus, selecting one zone from each of the four dialect areas is believed to be adequate. Within one dialect area, there are a number of zones (except in the Wallo Dialect that has only one zone, i.e., Oromia Zone of the Amhara Region). Accordingly, one zone from each three dialect

areas (i.e., Central, Eastern, and Western) was selected using simple random sampling technique. But, convenience sampling was used to select Oromiya Zone of the Amhara Region from the Wallo Dialect. With this regard, Dornyei (2007) stated that “---members of the target population are selected for the purpose of the study if they meet certain practical criteria---” Similarly, Oromia Zone of the Amhara Region is the only area where the Wallo Dialect is spoken. That is, the Wollo Dialect has the key characteristics which are related to the objectives of this study. Hence, it was selected for its convenience to the purpose of this study.

### **Participants of the Study**

**Teachers:** The effective implementation of an education program requires active participation of teachers and other concerned bodies. With this regard, teachers are one of the great stakeholders in education who put the designed program into practice. Hence, teachers were selected for this research project as it was believed that they have necessary information needed for this study and their experience is an input for the study. Accordingly, teachers of three subjects (i.e., Afan Oromo, Biology and Geography) were selected as participants of the study. Thus, 21 teachers were selected for this study (i.e., 4 teachers were selected from the Central Dialect Area, and 6 teachers were selected from each Eastern, Wollo and Western Dialect. Then, the selected teachers were made to fill in the questionnaire and were interviewed.

**Textbook and Exam Writers:** It was believed that textbook and Exam writers could provide data needed for this study as they take part in the issue of dialect and education. The selection of textbook and Exam writers could enable the researcher to assess their perception on the role and contribution of dialects for the learning and

achievement of students. In Oromia Region, one person writes both textbook and National Exam. Thus, three individuals (one each from Afan Oromo, Biology and Geography) who hold the responsibility of writing National Exam and textbook at regional level were chosen as participants of this study.

**Educational Authorities:** Educational authorities refer to educational office representatives or officials of educational bureaus at regional, zonal and school levels. The authorities are involved in the issue of dialect and education directly or indirectly. For this reason, it was believed that they could provide adequate information regarding the role and contribution of dialects on the students' learning. Therefore, individuals holding different positions in education were included in this study. That is, one authority from Oromia Educational Bureau (OEB), four educational authorities from the selected Zonal Educational Bureau (ZEB) (one each from the selected dialect areas) and 8 school directors.

### **Sampling Techniques**

In Oromia Regional Government the same individual writes textbooks and National Exams of Grade 8. There were more than one individual who write Exam and textbook for each subject. To select a participant for the study, random sampling technique was used. Using this technique, one individual was selected for the three subjects under consideration (i.e., Afan Oromo, Biology and Geography). As to the selection of educational authorities, purposive sampling was used. At OEB, ZEB and schools there were one individual working on the specified position. From each of them, one individual was purposively selected as it was believed that they provide necessary data for this study.

## **Tools of Data Gathering**

### **Questionnaire**

One complete questionnaire was designed and used to gather necessary data from the selected teachers. The main purpose of the questionnaire was to gather data on the perception of the teachers about the role and contribution of dialects to the students' learning and achievements. The questionnaire had open and closed-ended questions. It was designed in Afan Oromo. This was believed to facilitate the collection of accurate and detailed information from the respondents. Adequate orientation was given to the participants before and during the completion of the questionnaire.

### **Interviews**

Two types of interviews, semi-structured and key informant, were designed and used to elicit data from the participants of this study. Semi-structured interview (SSI) was prepared to collect data from teachers. The main aim of the teachers' interview was to triangulate and substantiate the data collected through the questionnaire. Beside, key informant interview (KII) was used to collect data from educational authorities and textbook and Exam writers on role and contribution of dialects for the learning and achievement of students. Both interviews were tape recorded, transcribed and translated into English to do the analysis.

### **Methods of Data Analysis**

The quantitative data collected via questionnaire was coded and filled into the SPSS version 20.0. Then, different statistical analyses such as frequency, percentage and cross tabulation were applied to the SPSS data and the statistical results were described and interpreted qualitatively. On the other hand, the recorded interviewed data were transcribed and

transformed into textual form. Subsequently, the textual data which were assumed to be relevant to achieve the objectives of the study were selected. In addition, the qualitative data obtained from the open ended items of the questionnaire were listed down. Then, the selected textual interview data and the listed qualitative data of the questionnaire were translated into English and categorized according to related themes. Finally, the categorized qualitative data were analyzed and discussed by integrating it with the result of quantitative data.

## **Results and Discussion**

This study was intended to assess the perception of educational practitioners on the role and contribution of dialects for instructional purposes. The perception and understanding of the practitioners is needed for discussion as it can affect the practice of the stakeholders in their respective place of work. To do so, data was collected and analyzed. Below the perceptions of the practitioners is categorically presented based on their responsibility.

### **Teachers' Perceptions on the Role and Contribution of Dialects for the Learning and Achievements of Students**

Among the stakeholders of education, teachers are the one who are aware of their students' learning, and the contents of materials taught and the Exams prepared. Because of this, teachers' perception on the use of dialects for education is relevant. In connection to this, teachers were asked if they think that the inclusion of the different dialects in education is important to the teaching and learning process. Their responses are presented below.

**Table 1:** Teachers' perceptions on the role and contribution of dialects for education

Item	Dialect Areas	Responses					
		Yes		No		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
Do you think that the inclusion of different dialects in the textbooks is important for the learning and achievements of students?	Central	3	75	1	25	4	100
	Eastern	5	83.3	1	16.7	6	100
	Wollo	6	100	-	-	6	100
	Western	4	80	1	20	5	100
	Total	18	85.7	3	14.3	21	100

Besides, the teachers who replied 'Yes' (See Table 1), were asked to list some of the importance of including dialects in education

- *It provides meaning to words unknown to some area.*
- *It enables students to get detail understanding of the material they read*
- *It makes students use their language in different areas*
- *It make education tangible for students whom home dialects is used*
- *It helps students to differentiate the various dialects of the language*
- *It is helpful to compromise the differences between dialects*
- *It enables students to learn different dialects and it strengthens students' language skills.*
- *It makes students to understand their lesson in simply way*

Furthermore, the teachers were interviewed on "whether they think that dialects have role and contribution for the learning and achievements of students." In response, the teachers forwarded two main ideas.

**Dialects have a great role in the learning and achievements of students and should be considered in educational setting.**

One group of teachers felt that dialects have a great role in the learning and achievements of students and it should be considered in the educational setting.

Accordingly, the teachers mentioned the following advantages:

students and should be given attention in educational setting. For example, Afan Oromo teacher in the urban school of the Central Dialect and Geography teacher in the rural school of the Wallo Dialect said, "Dialects have a great role in education". In addition, Afan Oromo teacher in the Central Dialect explained that "It [dialect] needs consideration. This is because a word that is normal in one area may be taboo in other [dialect] areas. Such variation can affect the understanding of our learners. Thus, it is an issue that requires great consideration." Besides, Biology teacher in the Central Dialect said, "There is a need to consider the dialectal variations [in education]. The variation has impact on learners' learning and achievement. There are also areas, which are not clear for teachers. There are areas were we [teachers] face problems. To avoid such problems of dialects, it needs careful attention." Similarly, Afan Oromo and Geography teachers in the urban school and in the rural school of the Western Dialect reported that dialects are important and needs consideration in education setting. These responses show that the majority of the teachers perceive that dialects are important for learning of

**Dialects have no role in the learning and achievements of students and should not be considered in educational setting.**

Some teachers reported that they don't believe that on the role dialects in the learning of students. For instance, Afan Oromo teacher in the urban school of the Eastern Dialect and Biology teacher in the rural school of the Wollo Dialect said that: Dialects have no role in education and hence, no need of considering dialectal variations as a concern in academic setting.

From the questionnaire and interview data, it can be said that the majority of the teachers perceive that the inclusion of different dialects is important in the learning and achievements of learners. Besides, the majority teachers seem to have positive perception about dialect and support the consideration of dialects in education. This could mean that the majority of the teachers could treat dialects positively in educational setting. This, in turn, is important for the learning of students as the teachers may encourage their students to use their own dialect in education or/and may not discourage them if their students use their own dialect in classrooms.

The teachers seem to have positive perception may be because of the course that they have taken on dialects during their college education and their access to reference materials on dialects. With this regard, it was found out that the majority of the teachers have taken course(s) during their college/university education on dialects (Wondimu, 2014). This, in turn, may help the teachers to have awareness and develop positive perception about dialects that could have positive impact on their classroom practice. In support to this, Wolfram et al., (1991) noted that having the knowledge about language varieties could improve the understanding about dialects and reduce misconceptions about language varieties.

The study also revealed that the perception of the teachers vary according to the subjects they teach. For instance, Afan Oromo and Biology teachers thought that dialects are important for education.

Nevertheless, they appear to support and oppose the consideration of dialects in education. On the others hand, Geography teachers appears to support the consideration of dialects. However, it was noted that teachers' perception does not vary based on the dialect areas where they are teaching.

***Textbook and Exam Writers' Perception on the Role and Contribution of Dialects for the Learning and Achievements of Students***

Afan Oromo and Biology textbook and Exam writers reported that dialects have great role for the learning and achievements of students. For this reason, they said that it is important to consider the dialectal variations in educational context. Besides, Afan Oromo textbook writer explained the reason saying "Students develop self confidence on themselves if they hear on media the way they speak. Students accept as their own case or feel it is for me if it[textbook and national Exam] is prepared in their own dialect. If you do not consider it [dialect], you commit a mistake. Hence, it needs consideration." However, Geography textbook writer holds the perception that dialects have a great role in education, but it is not important to give attention to the variations of dialects.

Thus, it seems that the textbook and Exam writers share similar perception on the role of dialects in education, but they differ on whether or not dialects need consideration in academic setting. This may imply that those writers, who have positively perceived the role and contribution dialects, support its consideration in education. Such writers may consider and use the various dialects while writing textbooks and national Exams. However, the writer who believes that it is not important to give attention to the variations of dialects may not use dialects in his/her respective work. With this regard, Adugna (2009) noted that in the preparation of textbooks, the writers tend to use their own dialects, which may not accommodate the other dialects. This, in turn, would mean that the perception of educational practitioners on the role



of dialects for education can affect their in their own respective work place.

***Educational Authorities' Perception on the Role and Contribution of Dialects for Learning and Achievements of Students***

During interview, educational authorities were asked whether or not dialects have role and contribution for the learning and achievements of students. In response, the Zonal Educational Bureau (ZEB) of the four Dialect Areas reported that dialects have a great contribution to the education of students. In relation to this, the ZEB of the Central Dialect explained that, "As individual person and as professional, I think special consideration should be given [to dialects]." He justified the reason for this saying; "Your teaching should make the learners understand the lesson very well. To enable the learners understand your lesson, you may ideally go long way and it may require to collect various words. Thus, the dialect appropriate to the context or local area [of the students] should be used [in education]. Knowing the local dialect has great relevance to transmit what you want say in a short way."

Similarly, the directors of the selected schools said that dialects have role in education. The director of the urban school in the Central Dialect illustrated that "For example, there are no much dialects of our area [Borana] in the Exams and class where the students are learning. In examination, especially in Afan Oromo, our students miss [failed to answer] questions that they could answer if it was asked in Borana Dialect [Central Dialect]. This is because of dialect variations. For this reason, it [dialect] have role in education" But the analysis of the students' achievements revealed that even though the Central Dialect was less related to the dialects used in the National Exams, the students of the Central Dialect achieved better results on the Exams (Wondimu, 2014). Besides, the director of the rural school in the Western Dialect underlined that without language and/or dialect, it is impossible to transmit education. He added knowing dialect and /or language is a

prerequisite in education. Moreover, the zonal and school educational authorities considered in this study replied that dialect needs consideration in educational setting. From the responses, it can be said that the majority of the educational authorities have positive perception about dialects and may encourage the use of dialects in education.

From the responses of teachers, educational authorities and textbook and Exam writers, one can understand that the practitioners in education had different perception about the role of dialects for students learning and achievements. Similarly, various research findings (Rosenberg, 1989; Mohammed, 2002; Hollingworth, 1989; Taylor, 1983; Romaine, 2000, Hudson, 2001) revealed that the perception of educational practitioners is not similar. In some countries, (i.e. Switzerland & Italy) there is positive perception towards dialects and their use in education. but, in other countries, (for instance, Belgium, Britan, USA and Holland, the perception of the stakeholders is not positive. Despite differences among countries, it is said that the perception of the stakeholders of education play a crucial role in the selection and use dialects for instruction as well as in the learning and achievements of students. Thus, the findings of this study agree with the previous researches in various parts of the country.

***The Implications of Educational Practitioners Perception for the Inclusion of Afan Oromo Dialects in Education***

According to Kebede (2009), Afan Oromo has six main dialects spoken in Ethiopia and Kenya. These dialects should be valued for the benefits of all students. Different studies (Cheshire, 2005, 2007; Derebsa, 2006) pointed out that giving value to the dialects spoken by learners in the classroom makes real difference to educational achievement of the students. For example, it is argued that the varieties of a language play an important role in an academic setting. In this connection, learning is claimed to be better and more successful when conducted in the variety spoken by students

## J. Equity Sci. & Sust. Dev.

(Cheshire, 2005; Cheshire (2007) further noted, "There is general consensus, in fact, among educationalist and sociolinguistics alike, that valuing dialect in the classroom makes real difference to educational achievement of speakers." Derebsa (2006) also argued that the use of the students' variety in education enables the students to use their own potential and helps them to achieve 'deep learning.' Besides, the consideration of dialects in education enhances the social, cognitive, emotional and linguistic development of learners' in and out of school. For these reasons, it is argued that the varieties of a language deserve respect and recognition in schools. This implies that the educational practitioners should have adequate understanding about the varieties of a language and address the varieties in their respective work scenario.

The result of this study revealed that the great majority of educational practitioners have positive perception about the role of dialects for students learning and achievements and they support the consideration of dialects in education. The existence positive perception among the practitioners could have its own implication for the inclusion of Afan Oromo dialects in education. For example, it may make the Exam and textbook writers to select and use the different dialects of Afan Oromo while writing the textbooks and national Exams. This may lead to the inclusion of different dialects of Afan Oromo in education.

In educational setting, a language is used to facilitate the understanding and learning of students and thereby to enhance the academic achievements of learners. To do so, the different dialects of Afan Oromo are needed to be included in the textbooks and National Exams. With this regard, Wondimu (2014) revealed that the words of the four dialect areas were used to write Afan Oromo, Biology and Geography textbooks and National Exams of Grade 8. However, the share taken from each dialect area does not seem similar. This may mean that the positive perception of the practitioners have positive correlation with the inclusion of Afan Oromo dialects in education.

The positive perception of teachers towards to the role of dialects could also enable them to treat Afan Oromo dialects positively in educational setting. Consequently, it can be said that the positive perception about the role and contribution of dialects can positively contribute to the use and inclusion of Afan Oromo dialects in students' textbooks and national exams.

### Conclusions

The study divulged that the great majority of teachers (87.5%) said that the inclusion of different dialects is important for the instructional purposes. In addition, the majority of the teachers reported that dialects have a great role in education and support the consideration of dialects in academic setting. This, in turn, may help the teachers to have awareness about dialects that could have positive impact on their classroom practice. In support to this, Wolfram *et al.*, (1991) noted that having the knowledge about language varieties could improve the understanding about dialects and reduce misconceptions about language varieties.

Similarly, the majority of textbook and Exam writers, and educational authorities considered in this study replied that dialects have a great role in education and the concern of dialects needs attention in educational context. This could mean that the majority of the respondents had positive perception to the use of dialects for education and could treat dialects positively in educational setting. This, in turn, is important for the learning of students as the educational practitioners may positively consider the dialects in their respective work area.

Furthermore, the positive perception of the practitioners could have its own implication for the inclusion of Afan Oromo dialects in education. That is, the positive perception about the role and contribution of dialects can positively contribute to the use and inclusion of Afan Oromo dialects in students' textbooks and national Exams. For example, it may make the national Exam and textbook writers to select and use the different

dialects of Afan Oromo while writing the textbooks and national exams. Moreover, the positive perception of teachers towards to the role of dialects could enable them to treat Afan Oromo dialects positively in educational setting.

### Recommendations

It is said that the knowledge and understanding of language variations can improve the negative attitudes. Accordingly, training should be given to the textbook and National Exam writers generally on the role and contributions of dialects for the learning and achievement of students and how to select dialects for instructional purpose in multidialectal society. Specifically, the textbook and national Exam writers should be given detail training on the dialects and how they should select dialects for textbooks and national Exams. By doing so, it is possible to raise the awareness of the writes on the selection of dialects for textbooks and national Exams writing. Moreover, teachers need to know and appreciate language diversity.

### Conflict of Interest

The authors declared that there is no conflict of interest regarding to this paper.

### References

- Adger, C. and Christian, D. (2007). *Sociolinguistic variation and education*. In Bayley, R. and Lucas, C.(Eds). (2007). *Sociolinguistic variation: Theories, methods, and applications* (237-253). Retrieved from: [WWW.Cambridge.Org/9780521871273](http://WWW.Cambridge.Org/9780521871273)
- Adugna Barkessa (2009). *Terminology related problem in teaching Afan Oromo at tertiary level*. (Unpublished Master's Thesis). Addis Ababa University: Ethiopia.
- Cheshire, J. and Trudgill, P.(1989). *Dialect and education in the United Kingdom*. In Cheshire, J., Edwards, V., Munstermann, H. and Weltens., B. (Eds). (1989). *Dialect and education: Some European perspectives* (94-112). Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Cheshire, J.(2005). *Sociolinguistics and mother tongue education*. In Ammon,U.,Dittmar,N. and Trudgill,P.(Eds). (2005). *Sociolinguistics: An introductory handbook of the science of language and society*(2<sup>nd</sup>) (2341-2350). Berlin: Moutonde Gruyter.
- Cheshire, J.(2007). *Dialect and education: Responses from sociolinguistics*. In Papapavou, A. and Pavlos, P. (Eds). (2007). *Sociolinguistics and pedagogical dimensions of dialect in education* (14-33). Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Cheshire, J., Edwards, V., Munstermann, H., and Weltens, B. (Eds). (1989). *Dialect and education: Some European perspectives*. Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Cook, G. (2003). *Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Coupland, N. and Jaworski, A.(Eds).(1997). *Sociolinguistics: A reader and course book*. New York: [Palgrave Macmillan](http://PalgraveMacmillan)
- Craen, P.V. and Humblet,I. (1989). *Dialect and education in Belgium*. In Cheshire et al.,(Eds). (1989). *Dialect and education: Some European perspectives* (13-29). Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Derebssa Dhufera (2006). *Issues in the implementation of Ethiopian school curriculum*. Robe: MadaWalabu University.
- Dooly, M. (2005). How aware are they? Research into teachers' attitudes about linguistic diversity. *Language Awareness*, 14 (2 and 3), 97-111.
- Dawnes, W. (1998). *Language and society* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dornyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in Applied Linguistics: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methodologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gfeller, E. (1999). *Language equality: Multilingual issues in Education*. Hawassa: Ethiopia.
- Hollingsworth, B.(1989). *Education and the Vernacular*. In Cheshire et al.,(Eds). (1989). *Dialect and education: Some European perspectives* (293-302). Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

## J. Equity Sci. & Sust. Dev.

- Holmes, J. (2001). *An introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Malaysia: Pearson Education Limited.
- Hudson, R.A. (2001). *Sociolinguistics (2<sup>nd</sup> ed)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jorgensen, J.N. and Pedersen, K. M.(1989). *Dialect and education in Denmark*. In Cheshire et al.,(Eds). (1989). *Dialect and education: Some European perspectives (30-47)*. Philadelphia. Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Kebede Hordofa (2009). *Towards genetic classification of the Afan Oromo dialects* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation). The University of Oslo: Sweden.
- Milroy, J.(2007). *The Ideology of standard language*. In Liams et al., (Eds). (2007). *The Rutledge companion to Sociolinguistics (133-139)*. New York: Taylor and Francis Group.
- MOE (1994). *Ethiopian educational and training policy*. Addis Ababa: St. George Printing Press.
- Mohammed,T.(2002). *An exploration of students' and teachers' attitude towards Ebonics in a Community College Writing Program*, Retrieved from: ERIC database (Ed 479490).
- Papapavou,A and Pavlos,P.(Eds).(2007). *Sociolinguistics and pedagogical dimensions of dialect in education*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Preston, D.R. and Robinson, G.C.(2005). *Dialect perception and attitudes to variation*. In Ball,M.J.(Ed). *Clinical Sociolinguistics (133-150)*.Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. Publishing Ltd
- Reaser, J. and Adger, C.(2008). *Vernacular language varieties in educational settings: and development*. In Spolisky, B. and Hult, M.(Eds). (2008). *The handbook of educational Linguistics (161-173)*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Romaine, S.(2000). *Language in society: An introduction to Sociolinguistics (2<sup>nd</sup> ed)*. Oxford: OUP.
- Rosenberg, P. (1989). *Dialect and education in West Germany*. In Cheshire et al.,(Eds). (1989). *Dialect and education: Some European perspectives (62-93)*. Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Sailzmann,Z.(2007). *Language, Culture and society*(Fourth edition ). USA: West view Press.
- Taylor, J. (1983). Influence of speech variety on teachers' evaluation of reading comprehension. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 75(5), 662-667.
- Trudgill, P. (2001). *Dialects: Language workbooks*. London: Taylor and Francis Group.
- Wardhaugh, R.(2006). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics (6<sup>th</sup> ed)*. Cambridge: Blackwell
- Wondimu Tegegne (2014). Investigating Dialectal Variations Of Afan Oromo In Primary Educational Context: Four Dialect Areas In Focus. PhD Dissertation, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia.
- Wolfram, et al. (1999). *Dialects in schools and communities*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associate Publishers.
- Wolfram, W. (1998). *Dialect in society*. In Coulmas , F.(Ed). (1998). *Hand book of sociolinguistics (75-87)*. Retrieved from <http://www.blackwellreference.com/subscriber/tocnode?>
- Yiakoumetti, A. (2007). Choice of classroom language in bi-dialectal communities: To include or to exclude the dialect? *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 37(1), 51-66.